

Appendix C

Technical Work Panel Meeting Minutes



United States Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services
6950-H Americana Parkway
Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068
614-469-6923



Facsimile: 614-469-6919

August 16, 1999

To: Technical Work Panel members

From: William Hegge, Darby Creek Watershed Project Manager

Subject: Final Notes--Meeting No. 3--Presentation of Concepts
August 4, 1999, 11:15 am at Best Western Hotel, Brice Road, Reynoldsburg, OH

Present:

Larry Harmon, Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Peter Precario, Ohio Audubon Council
Dr. Thomas Watters, Ohio Biological Survey
Linda McGuire, Champaign Co. SWCD
David Dhume, Madison County Comm.
Jim Stewart, Madison Co. SWCD
Bob Ames, City of Columbus
John Armentano, NRCS
David Horn, Columbus Audubon Society
Paul Dumouchelle, Darby Creek Association
Mike Funderburgh, Operation Future
Larry Libby, OSU Ag. Economics
Howard Wise, Ohio Dept. of Agriculture
Sam Speck, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources
Bill Moody, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources
Tim Lawrence, OSU Extension
Brian Armitage, Ohio Biological Survey
Denise King, TNC
Jim Mitchell, Union Co. Comm.
Kevin Schmidt, American Farmland Trust

Absent:

John O'Meara, Franklin Co. MetroParks
Dr. Julie Hambrook, USGS
Dr. Michael Hogarth, Otterbein College
Stephen Drumm, Union Co. SWCD
Dr. Alan Randall, OSU Ag. Economics
Keith Brus, Pheasants Forever
Bob Corbett, Champaign Co. Comm.
Lee Vermeer, Farmers National Co.
Richard Lahiere, Honda of America
Deering Dyer, Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
Dorothy Teater, Franklin Co. Comm.
Jeff Bohne, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
Neil Babb, Madison County Engineer

Others in Attendance:

Bill May, ODW
Dave Andersen, WOSU-AM
Kevin Adams, Resident W. Jeff.
John C. Wing, Operation Future
Randy Edwards, Columbus Dispatch
Teri Devlin, TNC

I. Introductions

- A. All members in attendance introduced themselves. Attendees were given a FWS Newsletter (Project Update), a handout for the meeting, and three concept maps of the proposed National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).
W. Hegge greeted everyone and introduced the Regional Director of USFWS Region 3, Mr. William Hartwig.
- B. W. Hegge announced that the deadline for written comments on the concept maps was August 10, 1999. This was later changed to August 20, 1999 after some discussion.

II. Questions and comments from the panel were addressed by W. Hartwig as follows:

A. Use of Condemnation for Land Acquisition

1. Condemnation will not be used to acquire land for proposed Little Darby Refuge. Purchases will be made from willing sellers only.
2. The USFWS has not used condemnation in 15 years, and has not used a declaration of taking in 30 years.
3. The USFWS may not dictate any rules, regulations, etc. to any landowners in and around refuge area. USFWS may only enforce rules, regulations, etc. on land that is owned by the refuge. Use of land owned by the refuge may not impact neighbors, (i.e. Function of roads and water drainage systems that go beyond FWS owned lands.
4. The proposed NWR is a neighbor, and will make all reasonable attempts to be a good neighbor.

B. Uniqueness of Concept

1. This refuge proposal is very unique. Although farming is not the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System this unit of the system will enable farming to continue as a transition or buffer to the more traditional voluntary purchase area of the refuge. This has never been attempted within the NWR system.

C. Explanation of Concept Maps

1. The dark green areas represent farmland preservation areas that will be kept in farming, as a recognition that farming is a "more natural" use of the land than housing or industrial developments.
2. The dark green areas represent areas that the USFWS would be interested in acquiring the development rights (PDR / easements), in order to permanently prevent urbanization and industrialization.
3. Persons that farm within the dark green area will be encouraged to use a range of conservation practices, including buffers and filter strips in order to help maintain the water quality of Little Darby Creek.
4. The light green areas represent voluntary purchase areas that the USFWS will be willing to purchase land at fair market value from willing sellers only. Priority will be to acquire all rights in the land.
5. The light green areas represent the most biologically significant areas of the project site for protection and restoration, and hence, the site of the protected area of the proposed NWR.

D. Process of Establishing a NWR

1. Congress must establish all NWRs, either via an Act of Congress, or by an appropriation of funds to purchase the land on which the refuge will be established.
2. The USFWS does not have the final say on whether or not the refuge is established--Congress does.

E. Taxes

1. NWRs do not pay federal, state, or local taxes.
2. The Federal Government pays what is known as NWR Revenue Sharing.
3. Whether or not this amount of money is equal to the current amount of taxes being paid on the property is dependent on the tax rate of the state and local government.
4. The money for Revenue Sharing is appropriated by Congress, and therefore is not guaranteed, however there are other ways to make up for shortness of funds that may result from this.

F. Accessibility

1. Most areas of the refuge will be open to the public, with the exception of areas designated as "critical habitat," or areas designated as "closed." The policy of all NWRs is "closed until opened."

G. Other Agencies Involved

1. Establishment of a NWR will not preclude the state or localities from administering other conservation programs in the area.
2. Cooperation between refuges, state and local agencies etc. is of great importance to conservation activities.

H. Why This Area was Selected for the NWR

1. It has relatively easy restoration potential.
2. It has an abundance of hydric soils that historically supported native wet prairie.
3. This project area encompasses only 15% of the watershed, yet includes half of the stream miles.
4. A significant number of natural heritage elements/sites exist within the study area and upper Little Darby Creek drainage.

III. Comments and Questions from Panel Members

- ï D. Dhume stated that the August 10 deadline for comments on the concept maps was too soon.
- ï S. Speck agreed that the deadline was too soon.
 - ï T. Lawrence agreed that the deadline was too soon and proposed an August 20 deadline. This was agreed upon.
 - ï J. Mitchell stated that he did not believe that public opinion, especially opposition to the refuge, was given enough attention. He referred to the county Commissioners that had been asked to restate their interest in serving on the panel after they voted to oppose the refuge. He also stated that he believes the area most in

danger of development pressure is between Big Darby Creek and Hilliard, Ohio. He would like to see the entire watershed protected, not just the Little Darby. He would like to see cooperation with Ohio Department of Agriculture, The Nature Conservancy, Farmland Trust, etc. for a more comprehensive project.

ï D. King stated that she thinks the Service needs to move more quickly through the preliminary input processes to get the important information to the public. She believes that people who are affected by this project should get information from the source before they get information from the newspaper.

IV. Explanation of Concept Maps by W. Hegge

- A. This area of the Little Darby Creek contains some of the most biologically, historically important areas and heritage elements in the watershed, and this is why it was chosen for the NWR site.
- B. The main focuses of this NWR would be to protect the water quality of the Little Darby, to provide protection for endangered species, and to provide habitat for migratory birds.
- C. It is hoped and assumed that ODW, NRCS, etc. will pick up where the USFWS leaves off in terms of protection of areas not included in the refuge proposal. The service cannot do it all.
- D. Concept map one--light green area encompasses a large, contiguous area of Spring Fork and Little Darby, both of which have been designated as exceptional warm water habitats by the OEPA.
- E. Concept map two--light green area includes slightly less area around Little Darby; a larger area of protection for Spring Fork is included, and also incorporated is land in the north and east that has valuable wetland restoration potential for migratory birds. Its drawback is that the area is more linear except at its southern extension.
- F. Concept map three--light green area includes Little Darby and a large parcel of land to the north with valuable wetland restoration potential for migratory birds. Mainstem of the Little Darby Creek corridor is given primary attention.

V. Comments on the Concept Maps from Panel Members

- ï P. Precario stated his preference for map two because it protects more of the upper drainage and Spring Fork. He stated that if the water quality was good, improvements in biological quality would follow from there. He also expressed concern that the project should encompass more land to the east.
- ï B. Armitage stated his preference for map two, but expressed concern at the narrow corridors that separate the main parcels of land. He thinks the corridors should be widened to improve access to the areas.
- ï T. Watters stated that without protecting Spring Fork, protecting Little Darby is useless because the two streams affect each other.
- ï T. Lawrence stated that under the guidance of this program, he believes that agricultural practices in the area will facilitate the protection of Little Darby Creek.
- ï P. Dumouchelle speaking for the Darby Creek Association stated that they were in favor of the concepts as long as they adhere to the original principles established, and he believes that they do. He requests that the NWR be established as soon as possible, and that it be as large as possible. He also expressed gratitude that agriculture is being included in the project and hopes that the farmers that opposed this refuge will reconsider.

VI. Conclusion by W. Hegge

- A. The draft Environmental Assessment will be released in early fall, and will be subject to a 60 day review during which time comments from everyone will be accepted. Several public meetings will be held, changes will be made to the draft, and the final EA will be written. Once this has been reviewed by the R.D., he will approve it or not. In the former case, he will sign a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and the project will proceed.
- B. Thank you for coming, adjourned 2 pm.



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January 7, 1999

To: Technical Work Panel Members:

From: William Hegge, Darby Creek Watershed Project Manager

Subject: Final Notes - Meeting No. 2- Draft Goals and Objectives
December 15, 1998, 6:30 pm at Cedar Ridge Lodge, Battelle Darby Metro Park

Present:

William Moody, Ohio Dept. of Nat. Res.
Peter Precario, Ohio Audubon Council
Tim Lawrence, OSU Extension
David Dhume, Madison County Comm.
John O'Meara, Franklin County MetroParks
Jim Stewart, Madison SWCD
Dr. Julie Hambrook, USGS
Kevin Schmidt, American Farmland Trust
Dorothy Teater, Franklin County Comm.
Bob Ames, City of Columbus
Christine Harmon, Darby Creek Assoc.
David Horn, Columbus Audubon Society
Joel Hastings, Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
Larry Harmon, DU
Dr. Michael Hogarth, Otterbein College
Dr. Lawrence Libby, OSU Ag. Economics
David Sheiderer, Operation Future Assoc
Stephen Drumm (Matt Furer, Union SWCD)
Jim Mitchell (Don Fraser, Union County Comm.)
Mark DeBrock (Patrick Wolf, USDA, NRCS)

Absent:

Dr. Thomas Watters, Ohio Biological Surv.
Dr. Alan Randall, OSU Ag. Economics
Keith Brus, Pheasants Forever
Teri Devlin, TNC
Brian Armitage, Ohio Biological Survey
Bob Corbett, Champaign County Comm.
Linda McGuire, Champaign SWCD.
Lee Vermeer, Farmers National Co.
Richard Lahiere, Honda of America
Karl Gebhardt, Ohio Dept. of Agriculture

I. Introductions

All members in attendance introduced themselves. W. Hegge recognized a request from David Dhume to include Mr. Neil Babb, Madison County Engineer, on the panel. No objections were noted.

The members present were advised of a FWS postage - paid opinion survey form that was available. A supply was provided to the members.

The Cedar Ridge Lodge meeting location was reaffirmed among the members.

II. Restatement of Objectives

Members were referred to objectives and those attending for the first time were advised of additional information made available at the first meeting.

III. Draft Goals and Objectives - Comments/Discussion

Members were asked to comment individually on the draft. The following comments are summarized for each member.

W. Moody: Goals and Objectives achieved balance and addressed needs of all interests, including agriculture.

L. Harmon: Overall, they were OK and D.U. could broadly embrace them.

M. DeBrock: Speaking for NRCS, balance was achieved.

T. Lawrence: Recognition of agriculture was good, but questioned whether drainage was adequately addressed.

C. Harmon: Generally pleased with them.

R. Ames: Wished to know if the Service could consider other recreational activities and land uses beyond those identified. With few exceptions, Hegge replied in the negative.

P. Horn: Especially pleased about the inclusion of agriculture, but felt that biodiversity needed to be defined. Hegge noted that this would be addressed in the Environmental Assessment.

D. Teater: Generally complete, but would like to see some attention given to prioritization.

J. O'Meara: Overall, good. Questioned if the Service would deviate from emphasis upon native wildlife.

J. Hastings: Stated Ohio Farm Bureau Federation (OFBF) Policy regarding the proposed refuge. Stated as follows:

The OFBF opposes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's designation of the Darby Prairie National Wildlife refuge. If this project proceeds, we support the following principles.

1. Farming is the highest and best use of the land
2. We oppose the use of eminent domain to take land for a wildlife refuge.
3. We oppose any regulations or restrictions on land within the refuge that would restrict farming practices or reduce the market value of the land.
4. Any change of land use within an area must maintain adjacent agricultural drainage.

Generally, noted that the goals and objectives were consistent with the OFBF's principles and hoped that this direction would be maintained within the Environmental Assessment. Noted that agriculture should not be considered as an alternative to urban sprawl but as a priority land use having intrinsic value.

K. Schmidt: Generally good with recognition of agriculture.

M. Hogarth: With respect to the inclusion of habitat, recommended that Goal I be redrafted to conform with Goal II. Suggested clarification of riparian habitat dimensions and a definition of education activities. Hegge noted that riparian habitat and education would be addressed in the Environmental Assessment.

J. Hambrook: Questioned if there was or would be a research component of the project. Noted that in order to restore and preserve species, more information was required.

D. Sheiderer: Concerned that there was not much in the draft that enabled the involvement of residents in the community.

S. Drumm: Concurred with D. Sheiderer and concerned about drainage maintenance.

J. Stewart: Drainage not addressed in goals and objectives. Will agricultural non-point pollution be considered point source pollution if refuge is established?

D. Dhume: Concerned that the goals and objectives did not address the Service's relationship with the property owners inside any eventual refuge boundary. Asked if the Service would have any jurisdiction/control over county land use plans affecting an area inside a refuge boundary. In addition, asked if the Service could establish or work with an advisory committee for drainage coordination.

J. Mitchell: Concerns consistent with that of Mr. Dhume. Pleased to see that Service recognized respect for present land use. Would the goals and objectives be prioritized?

P. Precario: Wanted to see more emphasis on habitat and water quality improvement, especially the latter, in the goals and objectives.

L. Libby: Expressed an opinion that the “process” part is missing from the goals and objectives. Asked if the Service performed resource monitoring activities as part of the refuge management program. Hegge explained and answered in the affirmative. Also, wanted to know if the Service involved the community through the use of advisory committees, town meetings, etc..

Categorical questions and comments from the panel were responded to generally by W. Hegge as follows.

Prioritizing Goals and Objectives

The relative priority of the goals and objectives was secondary to insuring that they were consistent with the mission of the Service. It was emphasized that the mission of the Service is not to preserve farmland but flows from congressional mandates to conserve, protect, and enhance federal trust resources (cited). An agricultural component of the goals and objectives was included to better enable private organizations and other political subdivisions, through funding and institutional support, to work with the Service and ameliorate potential agricultural land conversions that would be detrimental to the long term protection of a national wildlife refuge boundary and/or federal trust resource conservation. This component would also give the Service the ability to independently protect agricultural land (via easement/purchase of development rights) when it was in the interest of the Service’s mission.

County Land Use Plan Control

Generally, the Service would not have any control or jurisdiction over county land use plans. The Service has no less authority than any other landowner with regard to local land use plans.

Advisory Committees

The Service commonly uses “advisory” committees/groups to serve a coordination and liason function with communities regarding the implementation of refuge management programs. The suggestion to employ one to avoid conflicts that may arise from potential drainage modifications and management activities can be considered in the development of the Environmental Assessment and Comprehensive Conservation Plan.. The National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act mandates community involvement in the Comprehensive Conservation Planning process.

Native Wildlife

The service is mandated to direct activities toward the conservation of “federal trust resources” which are federally threatened and endangered, migratory bird and interjurisdictional fish species endemic to this country and its territories.

Uniform Reference to Habitat in Goals I and II

The suggestion to specifically include the phrase “...and their habitat” in Goal I similar to the manner in which it is referenced in Goal II seems reasonable. It will be reviewed.

Research Activities

Research is not a specific goal of the proposal, however, it is a traditional activity that supports refuge management programs and practices. Although the former research function of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is now part of another agency within the Department of the Interior, the United States Geological Survey, it will continue to be a vital part of Service land management activities.

Community Involvement and Drainage

Consideration of the Service's intent to involve the local community and methods for doing so are important, and specifically more relevant, within the framework of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Even though it is not specifically addressed in the Goals and Objectives, community involvement must be a consideration in the achievement of them. Overall, community involvement in this proposed project has been an important element even before the formal planning process began. It will continue to be one.

Drainage policy of the Service has been consistently referred to as one of maintenance and non-interference. Drainage will be maintained on any adjacent private lands. Establishment of a National Wildlife Refuge does not change the classification of non-point sources of pollution to point sources.

Water Quality and Prairie

Although water quality is not specifically referenced as a goal and/or objective, it is a critical habitat measure that ultimately affects the health of in-stream aquatic and terrestrial trust resources. The goals and objectives are targeted to achieve the maintenance and improvement of water quality. This will be reviewed.

Prairie restoration is one of the primary habitat practices within the proposed study area necessary to restore migratory bird species of management concern.

Implementation and Process

The Service's population and habitat monitoring activities are part of its overall management of national wildlife refuges. Essentially, monitoring is a vital component of most refuge areas. Management programs are supported by public involvement and outreach activities.

Adjourn 8:30 pm



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August 17, 1998

To: Technical Work Panel Members

From: Bill Hegge, Darby Watershed Project Manager

Subject: Technical Work Panel (TWP) Meeting/Discussion Notes - August 6, 1998

Present: William Moody, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources
Peter Precario, Ohio Audubon Council
Tim Lawrence, OSU Extension
David Dhume, Madison County Commissioner
Teri Devlin, TNC
Jim Stewart, Madison SWCD
Jeff DeRoche, USGS
John Tertuliani, USGS
Linda McGuire, Champaign SWCD
Bob Corbett, Champaign County Commissioner
Bob Ames, City of Columbus
Christine Harmon, Darby Creek Association
Karl Gebhardt, Ohio Department of Agriculture
Brian Armitage, Ohio Biological Survey
Alan Randall, OSU Agricultural Economics
John Armentano, USDA, NRCS
Keith Brus, Pheasants Forever
Chet Bowling, OSU Extension/Facilitator
John O'Meara, Franklin County MetroParks
Stephen Drumm, Union SWCD
David Sheiderer, Operation Future Association
Kevin Schmidt, American Farmland Trust

Seth Perry, Congresswoman Deborah Pryce's office
Randall Edwards, Columbus Dispatch

Absent: Don Fraser, Union County Commissioner
Lee Vermeer, Farmers National Co.
Dorothy Teater, Franklin County Commissioner
David Horn, Columbus Audubon Society
Dr. Lawrence Libby, OSU Agricultural Economics
Joel Hastings, Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
Dr. Michael Hogarth, Otterbein College
Richard Lahiere, Honda of America
Larry Harmon, DU

.INTRODUCTIONS

Panel members introduced themselves and briefly explained why they have an interest in the proposed project and the process.

II. MEETING LOCATION

The Cedar Ridge Lodge at Darby Metropark is acceptable to the panel as a regular meeting place for the panel.

III. TWP GUIDANCE

The guidance was included in the package given to each panel member with instructions to read it. If the members had concerns, they were asked to inform the project manager and the whole panel. The guidance included a discussion of the panel role, rules, facilitator and project manager responsibilities.

IV. PURPOSE AND PROCESS

A. Purpose of this panel is to provide input directly to the Service regarding development of the proposed refuge and act as a focus group for the preliminary scoping process.

B. Scoping and NEPA were explained generally and additional information was included in the prepared package for the TWP.

V. OBJECTIVES (as stated in the agenda)

- A. Focus input from stakeholders
- B. Provide constructive advice and suggestions
- C. Improve communication and understanding

VI. FOCUS QUESTIONS (Comments from the Panel)

A. WHAT ELEMENTS SHOULD BE PROTECTED/RESTORED IN THE PROJECT AREA OR WATERSHED?

- o Agriculture/farms should receive serious consideration as part of the overall proposal. The farm land in this area is the most productive farm land in Ohio.
- o The Darby Creek watershed.

Overall land use; hydrology; general/source impacts to the creek and watershed. Land use overview.
- o Native prairie restoration.
- o T. Devlin formally submitted study/survey identifying many different species of flora and fauna with status. (If members wish to receive a separate copy, please contact Bill Hegge. Otherwise it will be attached to the Service's record of the meeting only.)
- o Soils and habitat - overall ecosystem.
- o USGS - Study of species in small streams. Upper parts of streams, including headwaters of springs are important. Groundwater sources should be significant consideration in overall protection.
- o Aquatic species / terrestrial species.
- o Human population

A-1. WHY IS THE DARBY WATERSHED IMPORTANT?

- o High quality of its water.

- o Home to lots of people in addition to lots of species.
- o Watershed quality has been maintained even in the presence of people, development, etc.
- o Economic benefit of maintaining/restoring the natural habitat.
- o Quality of soil/biodiversity of the area.
- o The watershed is important; this is why people strive to maintain watershed quality.
- o Darby is important; need the Darby watershed as an area people can come to enjoy and get away from pressures of development and the city. Translates to leisure, aesthetics, dollars for the economy.
- o Question in people's mind is, "How can we protect the Darby watershed?"
- o As people use and enjoy the Darby watershed, they "take ownership" and want to protect it (i.e., litter less, etc.)

A-2. ANY REASON WHY THE DARBY WATERSHED AREA IS NOT IMPORTANT?

PANEL: "No."

B. DO SIGNIFICANT NON-FEDERAL ALTERNATIVES EXIST TO PROTECT RESOURCE AND CULTURAL VALUES IN THE WATERSHED?

- o Agency efforts (metroparks, Operation Future, etc.) currently do things which protect resources in the watershed.
- o Greater question is whether or not status quo protections are adequate. A refuge gives added protection and value over and above status quo.
- o No unifying alternatives exist which can protect the area as well as Federal involvement (i.e., the refuge). Should develop a Federal plan which cares for and balances cultural and natural resource values.
- o There is no need to hurry to institutionalize protections for the Darby watershed via a Federal refuge. Operation future and other non-government efforts are adequate to protect the watershed without a refuge.
- o The less government involvement in a conservative farm area, the better. Let non-government protections take care of resources in an area.
- o We should look at the proposed refuge as a tool and assess its usefulness in that way.
- o One question is whether or not local government is courageous and capable enough to address natural resource issues. One problem is that local government does not have adequate state authority to address resource needs.
- o Federal ability to voluntarily acquire property and not use eminent domain (i.e., not "take" property) is a very useful tool in protecting resources. It is a positive approach that can effectively be used in the Darby watershed.
- o Tennessee Valley Authority example: The TVA was able to bring together important stakeholders in the community and achieve resource protection without using eminent domain and without "taking" land.
- o Inadequate incentive funds from the federal government to address resource problems.

C. WHAT ARE LOCAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITY NEEDS THAT CONFLICT WITH OR SUPPORT THE PROPOSED REFUGE?

- o Proposed NWR is a counterbalance to development in the Darby watershed area. This is positive because expanding development is threatening farm land and the rural nature of the Darby watershed. (*TENDS TO SUPPORT*)
- o Tax revenue: Removing land from tax base (i.e., lost taxes) could be a problem. However, once the refuge is developed, additional taxes may be brought into the community. (*TENDS TO CONFLICT*)
- o Developers, environmentalists, others all feel the "5 acre rule" is hurting the watershed. That is, City of Columbus must undergo an attitude change with respect to the law that contains the "5 acre rule". It is a lousy law which impairs the ability of local communities to protect resources. The law is a conflict in that it may influence a local landowner to sell to a developer instead of selling to protect the resource. Thus, need Federal government involvement to ensure that private decisions/development is in the public interest and in the interest of the environment. (*TENDS TO SUPPORT*)
- o Community needs may be different things, such as \$200,000 homes, the need for farm land, the need to protect local natural resources, the need to develop, etc. (*GENERAL REMARK*)
- o Farmers would support the proposed refuge as a tool to stop spread of development into Madison County (and thus help protect farm land). The area/watershed really should not have development. Farmers would rather see a refuge on the land instead of seeing developments (houses) on the same land. This is one reason why an economic impact study is important (emphasis added). Note also that a landowner's rights are important; the landowner has right to sell his/her land to whomever they want. (*CONDITIONAL SUPPORT*)
- o When a house is developed on farm land, taxes are lost sometimes. (*GENERAL REMARK*)
- o Land value is lower in Madison County farther from the city (Columbus) than is farm land located closer to Columbus. Some farmers will sell land close to the city for higher dollars and use that land to purchase lower priced land farther out from the city in Madison County. (*GENERAL REMARK*)
- o If a refuge is developed, what would be the long term impact? Will the NWR attract additional development? Note that sometimes land next to a refuge increases property values in urban/metropolitan areas. Whether or not rural areas near the refuge will experience this same phenomenon is a prominent question. The mere fact that there is uncertainty is a conflict. In addition, there is uncertainty about the federal government having influence or control of private land contiguous with any refuge. (*TENDS TO CONFLICT*)
- o Maybe a map should be developed with all landowner parcels that shows landowner names, what land is available for sale, what land is not available for sale, which areas are targeted for development, which areas are identified by the City of Columbus for throughways, etc., and other features. This will help focus effort in making informed decision about how best to develop the proposed refuge. (*GENERAL REMARK*)
- o Development pressure, Columbus planning pressure, land going up for sale, etc., all cause uncertainty in the local community. Also, how are agricultural values protected amidst all of this change and pressure? (*GENERAL REMARK*)
- o There are 150 total landowners withing the proposed refuge boundary; about 85% of the property is locally owned. Some of the land is owned by non-resident farmers, etc. There are a couple of large multinational corporation farms, but most of the farms are local family corporations that were named as corporations for tax reasons or other necessary financial reasons. (*GENERAL REMARK*)

Facilitator encouraged members of this panel to think of tools the Service can use to reduce uncertainty for the local community, to address local community issues, etc.

WHAT DOES THE REFUGE SUPPORT, FROM A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE?

- o Will bring dollars into the local economy. Example, the "rails to trails" program, the eco-tourism, the wildlife watchers and bicyclists, etc., will bring money and other benefits into local communities. *(TENDS TO SUPPORT)*
- o Anything that makes it more cost effective for the farmer to manage his land will benefit the farmer. Reducing or minimizing pressure on land prices via "Purchase of Development Rights" (PDR's) will help farmers. *(TENDS TO SUPPORT)*
- o If the proposed refuge supports the local way of life, including farming, than the refuge will be very beneficial. The proposed refuge will benefit farmers via maintaining "open space" and the agricultural character of the local area. With this, the rural nature of the watershed is important and should be maintained. The proposed refuge will help maintain the rural nature of the watershed. *(TENDS TO SUPPORT)*
- o An agricultural "open space" buffer zone may be useful along the outside boundary of the refuge. Is this a community need? (After discussion, many members of the panel say, "yes, it is a community need.") *(TENDS TO SUPPORT)*
- o Darby watershed survey of attitudes about open space, development, etc. commissioned by TNC support the idea of maintaining open space and the rural nature of the watershed. *(TENDS TO SUPPORT)*
- o If farms are protected via easements, surrounding farm owners feel more secure in that agriculture is more stable in the area. The proposed refuge can help the local community in this regard. Thus, a refuge tends to have a non-developmental affect on the area surrounding the refuge. This means surrounding farm owners feel less pressured to sell their land to developers, etc. *(TENDS TO SUPPORT)*
- o Parallel effect - if it is difficult for developers to develop because of the refuge, developers will shy away from the refuge area and will likely go to already developing areas, instead. *(TENDS TO SUPPORT)*
- o One panel member believes the proposed Darby refuge may not curb development because of the strong development momentum of Columbus and Hilliard moving westward. *(GENERAL REMARK)*
- o One member feels the Service should use easements and/or PDR's on agricultural land to help protect farm land from development momentum. Additional members of the group confirmed that use of easements and PDR's on farm land inside the refuge and outside the refuge is extremely important. *(GENERAL REMARK)*
- o Metropark officials want to improve and manage wildlife habitat in areas where it is suitable. *(GENERAL REMARK)*
- o The proposed refuge would enhance the community's identity. Most likely will enhance the prestige of the local community; people know the Darby watershed (and, in the future, its new refuge) adds to the prestige of the local community. *(TENDS TO SUPPORT)*
- o Enhanced local prestige will draw people to the area and increase the importance of efforts to protect and manage the Darby watershed. *(TENDS TO SUPPORT)*
- o If refuge is developed, increased potential exists to work with local communities (towns, cities, counties) to protect resources. Increased cooperation from state and federal entities will likely also result. Ability of local communities to manage local resources, such as soils, can be very productive. *(TENDS TO SUPPORT)*

D. CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCE ELEMENTS RECOMMENDED AS INTEGRAL TO ANY SERVICE ALTERNATIVE.

- o Service should work with local and regional planning efforts. An "all encompassing plan" for the area is being developed by Operation Future and the Service should participate in that effort and listen to what people have to say.
- o Should have a committee of landowners and citizens to assist with infrastructure considerations (ditches, other drainage, roads, ROWs, wetlands, prairie, culverts, related maintenance, etc.)
- o An option for the Service to rent farm land will be useful. For example, use a point system that represents impacts to a given farm resulting from the refuge. The practice of permittee farming should receive high consideration at the proposed refuge.
- o Regarding stream headwaters, protection of headwater/groundwater sources should be incorporated into the proposed refuge effort. These are usually non-farmable areas that remain wet.
- o Opportunity to highlight the cultural history of the watershed should exist with the proposed refuge.
- o Ultimate organizational focus of the refuge should be the aquatic habitats of the Big and Little Darby Creeks, themselves.

VII. OPEN DISCUSSION OF OTHER TOPICS

- A. Organizing principles should be considered.
 - o Should develop refuge according to its best use (ie, species needs, agriculture, houses, other maximal uses).
 - o Relationship between parcels of land.
 - o Optimize funds to target and acquire the most valuable plots of land. Target incentives and land.
 - o One suggestion is to include economic assessment in the overall NEPA assessment for the proposed refuge (emphasis added).
 - o One value of the proposed refuge is that it will slow down development. Thus, should refuge be located differently to strategically slow development, maximize resource protection, etc.?
 - o Subject of "land takings". This will not be done by the Service in the Darby watershed. However, it is important to educate landowners in the Darby watershed to know that the Service will not practice eminent domain or other "land takings" practices in the Darby watershed. Voluntary sale of land is how the Service will acquire land.
 - o Similar to concerns about "takings", farmers are concerned about effects of the refuge on needed drainage, roads, etc., as they affect a farmer's ability to operate. Concerns exist that future political leaders may allow land "takings"; however, present Congressional interests have indicated that eminent domain will not be used by the Service..

VII. Final comments

The information gathered from this panel meeting will be compiled, evaluated and considered in the planning process for the proposed Little Darby National Wildlife Refuge.